



## **Nevada Veterans Services Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** March 26, 2010  
Grant Sawyer Building, Rm 4412E  
555 E. Washington Ave.  
Las Vegas, NV 89101

### **Roll Call**

**Present:** Kathy McClain  
Bill Baumann  
Ronald Gutzman  
Gina Crown  
Terry Care  
Scott Smith  
Mike Musgrove  
Sally Wiley

**Absent:** Sean Fellows

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

### **Guest and Representative Introduction:**

Tim Tetz – Executive Director – Nevada Office of Veterans Services  
Carole Turner – Deputy Executive Director – Nevada Office of Veterans Services  
Chris Naylor – Superintendent – Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery  
Jeanette Rae – Veterans Service Program Manager – Nevada Office of Veterans Services  
DeeDra Cornelius – Executive Assistant – Nevada Office of Veterans Services  
Dave Evans – District 1 Commander – American Legion

### **Approval of this Meeting's Agenda:**

Bill Baumann – Made a motion to accept the agenda  
Terry Care – Seconded motion  
Decision: Unanimous

### **Approval of September 11, 2009 Minutes:**

Mike Musgrove – Made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected  
Bill Baumann – Seconded motion  
Decision: Unanimous  
Changes Requested: None

## **NOVS Agency Reports:**

### **Fiscal Report:**

Report given by Tim Tetz for Joseph Palmer – Agency Financial Officer - Nevada Office of Veterans Services  
(All items and charts can be found in the Commission book)

### **Overview:**

1. Special Session:
  - a. Cuts from 2006 special session were discussed for fiscal year 2010 and fiscal year 2011.
  - b. At the last Veterans Service Commission meeting the Commission had recommended the Agency raise the rates at the Home and this was approved.
  - c. An executive order has been issued limiting travel and training.
  - d. The Agency is trying to reduce contracts by 15% and will create savings within personnel.
    1. One nurse could not be hired before the March 1<sup>st</sup> hiring freeze creating vacancy savings.
  - e. The Budget Division was looking at the gift accounts for money, but they are not able to take it at the moment.
  - f. They also wanted NOVS to increase rates for spouse burials at cemeteries.
  - g. Another 10% cut was requested from NOVS for fiscal year 2011.
  - h. 35% of the IT budget in account 2560 was taken, but there wasn't as much taken from the Home.
  - i. Over all, the Agency's budget went down by 31% plus 14 - 15% each year.
  - j. The hiring freeze keeps the Agency from hiring a VSO in Elko, though if someone is not hired then NOVS will lose the position.
  - k. If more cuts are made the Agency may have to shut down certain services which are not supported by law to continue to stay open; possibly VSOs program.
2. Budget Account 2560:
  - a. The budget is short partly due to custodian fees no longer collected.
    1. All wards should be discharged before the end of the year.
  - b. The bottom line shortfall is \$91,000 in revenue.

- c. Less equipment will be purchased to save money for other needed items.
  - d. Four day work weeks don't work at the Home and wouldn't be feasible for NOVS offices.
  - e. Superintendents at the cemeteries said they could make it work if they had to, but it is not preferable due to the impact it will have on burial rates.
  - f. NOVS offices are in federal buildings which don't shut down and four day work weeks would not benefit the time veterans couldn't come in for claim appointments.
3. Budget Account 2561:
- a. Less money coming in due to the weakening of the economy.
    - 1. People are keeping their loved ones home to keep the money there.
  - b. A \$450,000 advance was given to the Agency which needs to be paid back.
4. Gift Accounts (2562):
- a. Cemetery Gift Account:
    - 1. The balance of this account is just short of \$100,000
    - 2. Budget thought about sweeping this account to take the money.
    - 3. Three things have been financed from this account.
      - a. Construction management for State Public Works Board; some of the money has been reimbursed.
      - b. A visitor kiosk; all of the money will eventually be reimbursed.
      - c. Greening of the grass at the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery.
    - 4. The money in this account needs to be used for the betterment of the veterans before it gets taken by the state.
  - b. License Plate Gift Account:
    - 1. People continue to use plates even with economy issues.
    - 2. The first \$100,000 is given to NSVH.
    - 3. \$30,000 goes to marketing to go toward raising the census numbers at NSVH.
    - 4. This year's expenditures went to the mobile outreach vehicle (MOV) events
    - 5. The Womens Veterans Summit was also supported by this account.

6. A Disabled American Veterans (DAV) van was being purchased out of this gift account.
7. The balance of this account is just over \$400,000, with approximately \$75,000 already committed to the marketing team each year.
8. NOVS will be doing some enhanced outreach this year as well.

**Nevada State Veterans Home (NSVH) Administrator Report:**

Report given by Tim Tetz for Gary Bermeosolo – Nevada State Veterans Home Administrator

(All items and charts can be found in the Commission book)

**Overview:**

1. The average age at the Home is currently 82.
2. Recruitment efforts are 96% in southern Nevada and 4% in northern Nevada.
3. The current resident census is 168.
4. NSVH is discharging to hospitals or residents are dying at the Home creating an occupancy rate of 93%.
5. The Agency is spending money for advertising to raise the occupancy numbers.
6. Local radio ads are being run as part of the marketing strategy.
7. The Home accepts spouses and gold star parents.
8. Veterans are offered a reduced rate for care at NSVH.
9. NSVH is currently a top rated home within the nation.
10. 15% of admissions came from a sticky note placed in the Review Journal, though the ad won't always be in the paper.
11. The VA survey to be conducted at NSVH will happen any time.
12. Medicaid and VA surveys are almost exactly the same; making them become one survey would be beneficial.
13. The updated copay for residents will take effect July 1, 2010.
14. During the family meeting at NSVH, families understood the need for raised rates at the Home as well as other implemented costs.
15. Pinnacle surveys are showing improvements.
16. The Commission requested the "Veterans Spirit" go directly to each member instead of in the books by mail.
17. The letter from the Commission asking for rate increase was given to the Governor.
18. Governor Gibbons agreed to the rate increase after certain key veterans showed their support and the agency provided a point paper.

19. Some veterans brought up they were upset they weren't involved; though only some were there because of the lack of time to coordinate more for the meeting, and the area was standing room only.
20. Nevada Veterans Assistance League (NVAL) supports the home by putting together fundraisers and they also run the canteen at NSVH.
  - a. The NVAL annual golf tournament will be held April 17<sup>th</sup>.
  - b. Commission members were invited and asked to spread the word.

### **Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Report:**

Report given by Tim Tetz for Wes Block – Cemetery Superintendent  
(All items and charts can be found in the Commission book)

#### **Overview:**

1. The cemetery interred 41 veterans and/or spouses in the month of March.
2. There are over 6,000 people currently buried in the cemetery.
3. Interments are increasing at this cemetery though they seem to be decreasing in other cemeteries.
4. NOVS didn't budget for the increase in burials they've had.
5. There are currently 3 people buried at NNVMC who were killed in action (KIA).
6. Honor guard services are provided for those buried who don't have family there for services.
7. This facility is fully staffed at this time.
8. The -20 degree weather has caused damage to some ground cover at the cemetery.
9. NNVMC is moving forward with the grant for the expansion project and grass placement

### **Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Report:**

Report given by Chris Naylor - Superintendant  
(All items and charts can be found in the Commission book)

#### **Overview:**

1. Chris Naylor was introduced as the new SNVMC Superintendent.
2. Both SNVMC and NNVMC cemetery superintendents are working together to create a uniform report.
3. There were 120 total burials in the month of February.
4. The total burials for this cemetery are 25,616 to date.

5. There have been 266 burials throughout this calendar year at SNVMC.
6. Two positions at SNVMC have recently been filled:
  - a. Ground Equipment Operator
  - b. Administrative Assistant
7. The triennial review for SNVMC will be held in April, 2010.
8. There has been a large increase in volunteers who want to be involved with the cemetery:
  - a. There are approximately 20-30 volunteers at the cemetery on certain days.
9. Special events:
  - a. A flag retirement ceremony will be held May 1, 2010.
  - b. Special Forces Day will be celebrated on May 30, 2010.
  - c. The Memorial Day ceremony will be held May 31, 2010.
10. Chapel plaque update:
  - a. There are 4 of 7 names on the current plaque which people have complained about, due to convictions.
  - b. The cemetery has received phone calls about the removal or changing of the plaque.
  - c. The plaque is a unique granite and the county has a generic brass plaque they want to replace it with
    - i. NOVS has decided it will replace the plaque with something decent and charge the county for it.
  - d. The cemetery commission believes the plaque should be left alone because they were part of it when it was built regardless of any conviction verdicts.
11. Challenges within the cemetery:
  - a. The placement of artificial flowers, statues, flags, etc. has become an issue because policy had not previously been enforced.
  - b. Flags used to be offered at the administration office; however, this is no longer the practice and was never policy.
    - i. The state cannot pay for flags to go on grave sites; previous flags used had been donated at one point.
    - ii. Flags are not being thrown in the trash.
    - iii. Flags are allowed on Memorial Day and Veterans Day on gravesites
    - iv. Federal policy is being used at the state cemeteries regarding grass, flags, flowers, etc.
    - v. People are complaining about the changes being made to follow original policies.
  - c. SNVMC is working toward making areas of the cemetery green with grass.

- i. There is a water problem at the cemetery, along with evaporation and wind.
- ii. More water will go on the ground and they will be seeding problem areas.
- iii. The water bill will increase and may possibly double or triple the current amount.
- iv. The cemetery had not been fully fertilized in 8 years and where it had been; only certain sections were covered.
- v. A landscaping company will be working with the cemetery to recover the grass.
- vi. Fertilization will be put into the Agency's budget for the cemetery.
- vii. The fertilization project will take about two thirds of what is remaining in the SNVMC's portion of the cemetery gift account.

12. Training:

- a. Both cemetery superintendents will be attending a training conference in June.
- b. The SNVMC superintendent will attend BOSS training.
- c. VA training will also be attended, though details are not currently available.

**Veterans Services Program Report:**

Report given by Tim Tetz for Jeanette Rae – Veterans Services Program Manager

(All items and charts can be found in the Commission book)

**Overview:**

- 1. VSO Update:
  - a. NOVS had two VSO position openings:
    - i. The Las Vegas office VSO position was filled before the March hiring freeze
    - ii. The Elko office VSO position continues to be open while the Agency determines the possibility of filling it during the hiring freeze
- 2. Elko Office:
  - a. An Administrative Assistant was hired in Elko prior to the March hiring freeze.
  - b. The office is finding it hard to manage its clients with only one VSO currently there to assist with services.
- 3. Mobile Outreach Vehicle (MOV) Update:
  - a. The locations and schedule of the mobile office will be restructured to attend different events.
  - b. The MOV will be attending more events this year than in the previous year.
  - c. Contract staff is online and ready to work within the mobile office.

4. Shinseki letter:
  - a. The letter states the VA is trying to get post 911 GI Bill fixed
  - b. The VA is will be utilizing computerized applications soon.
5. Persian Gulf Issue:
  - a. There is currently not enough medical evidence for all problems.
  - b. The VA has determined a couple of diseases for this era regarding presumptive illness.
6. Guardianship Report:
  - a. The Agency is down to 5 veteran wards as of March 15, 2010 within the guardianship program.
  - b. The program has been discharged of 2 veteran wards in Las Vegas, with the possibility of one more discharge in the following week.
  - c. It is projected the Agency will no longer be in the guardianship business by the end of the year.

**Executive Director Report:**

Report given by Tim Tetz – Executive Director

(All items and charts can be found in the Commission book)

**Overview:**

1. Legislative Updates:
  - a. A draft of the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day bill was provided to VSC members.
  - b. The distinction between “brown water” and “blue water” is an issue; anyone with Agent Orange problems needs benefits.
  - c. A briefing page from the VA regarding the federal fiscal cycle was provided to VSC members.
  - d. Testimony from Terry Scow was provided; asking for assistance from Congress.
  - e. Bills S1784 and S1785, from Senator Ensign, were provided to commission members to review.
  - f. Talking points of the National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH) federal bills were provided to commission members.
    - i. This bill explains a change needed in the wording “all children lost” when making the determination of a Gold Star Parent.
  - g. More funding is needed to provide adequate appropriations to grant programs for nursing homes.
2. Legislative Symposium:
  - a. A packet was handed out for Legislative Symposium explaining the agenda for the event.



- i. Current compensation and pension information is in the hand out.
  - ii. Outreach county targets are in the hand out
  - iii. The U.S. military question was not asked on the census
    - 1. 2008 veteran population numbers are still being used by the Agency
    - 2. The Agency will not use 2010 numbers until it can obtain actual numbers.
- b. The symposium will happen after the Women Veterans Summit at 1:00 PM.
- c. The symposium provides an opportunity to give veterans and organizations to speak their concerns and issues with the State.
- d. This year the process will be to discuss where NOVS is and where it will go legislatively.
- e. There will be a white board exercise:
  - i. Everyone will write down issues and state which they believe is the best to work on.
  - ii. Issues/topics of interest will come from veterans and organizations, not NOVS
- 3. Late Breaking issues:
  - a. Letter from Assemblyman Tom Grady:
    - i. The letter is regarding Shirley Stevens, a mother whose son served 26 years in the Navy and later passed from Lou Gherig's disease.
    - ii. Ms. Stevens' son does not qualify, by the federal definition of Gold Star, for her to receive gold star license plates.
    - iii. NOVS has responded to the letter sent by Assemblyman Tom Grady explaining the definition and why she is not eligible.
    - iv. The law itself must be changed if she is to become eligible for the Gold Star plates in Nevada.
    - v. Her family is eligible for a Navy plate; however, this is not the plate she wants.
- 4. PODS will no longer be donating for NOVS use, they will now be charging for each container.
- 5. There was discussion regarding the secret ballot and how it would mess up AB41 passed by the 2009 Legislature regarding active duty voting from over seas.

#### **Deputy Executive Director Report:**

Report given by Carole Turner – Deputy Executive Director  
(All items and charts can be found in the Commission book)

**Overview:**

1. Women veterans:
  - a. The 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Women Veterans Summit is being held on March 27, 2010.
  - b. NOVS thanked the different veteran organizations for their help.
  - c. The veterans gift account is sponsoring the summit along with other donations and VA funding, which has helped to create this event.
  - d. The last summit reached out to over 200 women veterans.
  - e. This year the summit is expected to have at least 400 people in attendance, though all are welcome to attend so more may show up.
2. Outreach:
  - a. The new service officer in Las Vegas, Craig Hill, has a lot of background experience, is an OEF/OIF veteran, and will be very helpful in OEF/OIF outreach.
  - b. Outreach at Nellis Air Force Base will be conducted one Wednesday out of each month for claims up to 6 months prior to discharge.
  - c. Veteran and senior outreach will be conducted.
  - d. There was a homeless stand down in Las Vegas this week and the mobile office was in attendance providing services.

**Unfinished Business:****Nevada State Veterans Home Rates****Overview:**

1. Grocery Bag Rebate:
  - a. NOVS has not received an update from the volunteer regarding the status of this project.

**Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Committee – Gina Crown****Overview:**

1. The Korean Memorial is underway at NNVMC.
2. The VA Triennial review was received showing NNVMC did well by national standards.
3. The cemetery expansion is happening in May 2010.

**Other Reports:****American Legion (ALG) Update**

Report given by Ron Gutzman

**Overview:**

1. The health bill did not change the health care options that the veterans didn't want them to.
2. Legion posts are busy screening and getting candidates for Boys' state and Girls' state.
  - a. The kids are charged only \$50 and the American Legion covers everything else.
3. School awards are happening in the junior high level
  - a. These awards are presented to one boy and one girl who express leadership and initiative in the areas of government.
4. Junior ROTC Awards are given to students in ROTC programs at high schools within the state.
  - a. Participants are chosen by people in the program
  - b. The program is currently looking at 4 people.
  - c. Of these 4 people, 2 will receive \$500 dollar bonds.
  - d. 1 will receive an award for military excellence.
  - e. 1 will receive an award for scholastic excellence.
5. Emergency Fund
  - a. The American Legion put together an emergency fund to help colleagues in other states
  - b. Most of the money has gone to victims of hurricanes if posts are torn down, etc.
  - c. They have given \$3500 so far.
6. Legacy Scholarship fund:
  - a. Providing college money for kids of veterans who are killed in action in middle east conflicts.
  - b. Has been provided \$4000 so far.
7. Child welfare foundation:
  - a. Kids who need medical help receive this money.
  - b. They have given \$3000 so far.

**Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Update**

Report given by Bill Baumann

**Overview:**

1. Mid winter conference was held in Washington, DC in February through March
2. Bills of interest:
  - a. Caregiver program
    - i. Will provide help for people who give up their lives to help their loved ones who have military related disabilities which cannot take care of themselves anymore.
  - b. Improving and expanding the healthcare services for women veterans all the way down to maternity.

- c. Improve mental healthcare for OEF/OIF coming back with issues
  - d. Working toward eliminating copayments for those who are disabled and those who have a va disability related issue and go into ER for care.
  - e. All bills are waiting on signatures.
- 3. Wheelchair and medical equipment
  - a. Last year, by the end of September the DAV recycled \$1.2 m worth of wheelchairs.
  - b. They have recycled \$3m from October 1<sup>st</sup>.
- 4. The demographics of volunteer drivers, miles driven, veterans transported, and many other volunteer projects were discussed. This information can be found in the commission book.
- 5. DAV held a homeless stand down on Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup> in Northern Nevada.
  - a. Donated clothing was given out to the homeless.
  - b. Everything was given away and nothing was wasted.

## **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Update**

Report given by Mike Musgrove

### **Overview:**

- 1. The VFW has a VSO seeing clients in Elko, Hawthorn, and Ely.
  - a. Their outreach program works to get into areas where there is no program available.
- 2. They are helping families of deployed veterans.
  - a. They have gathered \$2500 for 221 Calvary Unit coming back this week.
- 3. Utah is working on legislation for veterans court
  - a. The VFW has directed them to NOVS for advisement.
- 4. The VFW has an ROTC program in the universities
  - a. Checks and medals are rewarded at UNR and UNLV to students who are selected by the program.
- 5. Voice of Democracy
  - a. This is a high school program.
  - b. A speech consisting of 300-400 words is given.
  - c. A Mesquite girl was the national winner of a \$10,000 savings bond.
- 6. The VFW continues to work toward veterans entitlements.

### **New Business**

- 1. June meeting changes:

- a. This meeting was not held in Mesquite as originally planned, instead it was held in Las Vegas due to the budget.
- b. The Commission decided on the date of June 23<sup>rd</sup> at a prior meeting:
  - i. The current location for the June meeting was set for Las Vegas.
  - ii. The Commission has decided this location will stay the same due to current meetings which will happen in the Las Vegas area.
- 2. Stolen Valor Information Program
  - a. This will become a new business item for discussion on next agenda.
- 3. Veterans court will be an item on a future agenda but not discussed at the next meeting.

## **Future Meetings**

### **Upcoming Commission Meetings:**

- 1. **Veterans Service Commission Meeting**  
June 23, 2010 – Las Vegas, NV – Grant Sawyer Building
- 2. **Veterans Service Commission Meeting**  
September 10, 2010 –  
This meeting will be co-located with the next GWOT conference when the location becomes available.
- 3. **Veterans Service Commission Meeting**  
December 7, 2010 –  
This meeting will be in Reno and will coincide with the Veterans Summit on December 8, 2010
- 4. **Legislative Rally**  
March (?), 2011 –  
No date or location currently available

## **Adjournment**

Chairwoman Kathy McClain – Adjourned the meeting